

## NEW ORLEANS NOSTALGIA

*Remembering New Orleans History, Culture and Traditions*

*By Ned Hémard*

### **Eggs Hussarde**

1951 was an interesting time in New Orleans' history. Harry Truman was President and Chep Morrison was completing his fifth year as Mayor of the Crescent City. Released in September of that year, the film version of Tennessee Williams' Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, starring Paul Newman and Vivien Leigh, was a huge success. Set in New Orleans, the film set an Oscar record when it became the first film to win in three acting categories plus a fourth for Art Direction.



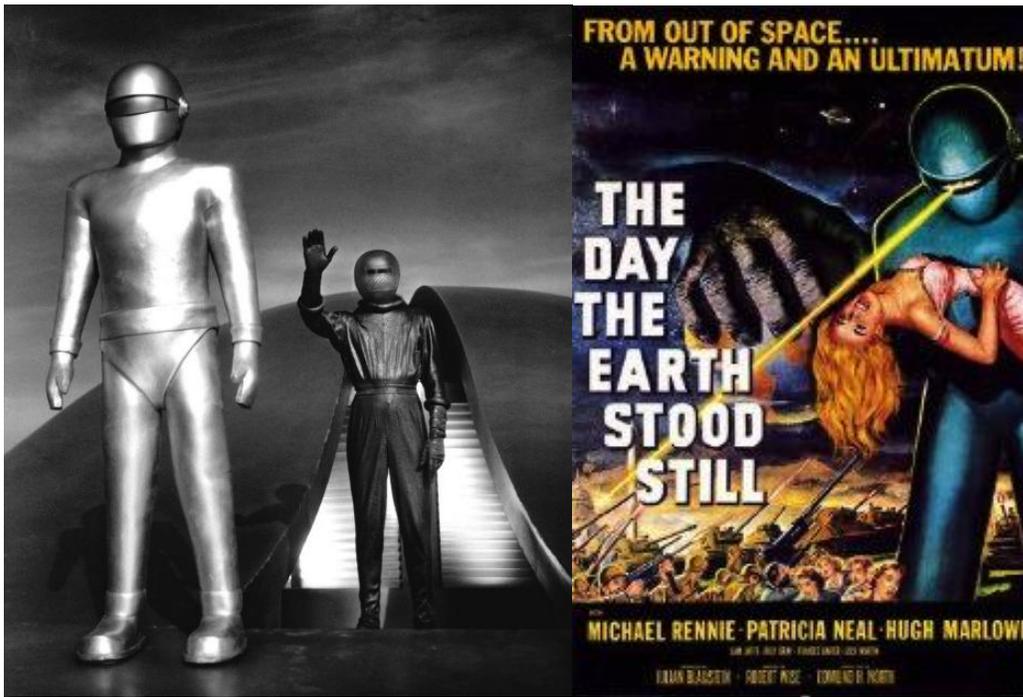
*The Pontalba Apartments, New Orleans in 1951*

Also in September, at the St. Charles Hotel in New Orleans, the 9th World Science Fiction Convention was held. Also known as Nolacon I, the much-anticipated event took place on the first three days of the

month. The guest of honor was the popular writer of fantasy, horror and science fiction, Fritz Leiber of Chicago, who was also the associate editor of *Science Digest* magazine. Harry B. Moore, President of the New Orleans Science-Fantasy Society, served as convention chairman. Also noteworthy at the convention were the world premiere screenings of two significant movies: *The Day The Earth Stood Still* and *When Worlds Collide*. *The Day The Earth Stood Still*, perhaps the most iconic sci-fi flick of the 50s, starred Michael Rennie and Patricia Neal - and who could forget the film's eight-foot tall robot named Gort? Or the words, "Klaatu barada nikto," described by the Robot Hall of Fame (yes, there is one) as "one of the most famous commands in science fiction"? Fans saw and heard it all first in New Orleans, at the St. Charles Hotel, today the site of Place St. Charles.



*1951 photograph of the St. Charles Hotel, site of Nolacon I*



## ***Fiction, Fantasy Meeting Slated***

The ninth World Science Fiction convention, which opens in New Orleans next Saturday for three days, will be open to the public, Harry B. Moore, convention chairman, announced Saturday. Sessions will be held in the St. Charles hotel.

Moore, who is also president of the New Orleans Science-Fantasy Society, said:

"Science fiction and fantasy stories are widely read now, and we feel that many nonclub members may wish to attend some or

all of the sessions. Persons wishing to attend may do so by registering on the opening day."

Fritz Leiber, Chicago, associate editor of Science Digest magazine, will be guest of honor and will speak at the opening day session. The convention will be attended by editors, publishers and authors of science fiction and fantasy stories.

A high light of the convention will be the world premieres of two movies, "When Worlds Collide" and "The Day the Earth Stood Still."

The rare metal palladium requires the working of many tons of ore to obtain an ounce of it.

### *New Orleans Premiere of The Day The Earth Stood Still*

1951 was also the year Brennan's chef Paul Blangé created his famous dessert, Bananas Foster, made from bananas, vanilla ice cream and a sauce made from brown sugar, dark rum, butter and banana liqueur. At that time, since New Orleans was a major hub for the import of bananas from South America, a dessert made from bananas seemed like a good idea. Igniting the preparation in a tableside *flambé* was a brilliant one.



*Bananas Foster served tableside at Brennan's 2015*

Also appearing in 1951, at least the earliest newspaper advertisement I could find in which it was mentioned, was another famous New Orleans dish (and one that was also created by Chef Paul Blangé for Brennan's). This other popular "Breakfast at Brennan's" specialty was "Eggs Hussarde" and in 1951, when the restaurant was on the corner of Bourbon and Bienville, it could be had (accompanied by strawberries and cream, along with coffee) for only \$2.45.

**A New Orleans Tradition . . .**

**Brennan's**  
**SUNDAY**  
**Breakfast**

Served from 9 A. M.

**HOLIDAY Magazine**

**Newsweek Magazine**

**Esquire Magazine**

**Collier's Magazine**

Sunday Dinner Served 11:30 A. M. to 7:30 P. M. from \$2.50

Bananas and Cream  
Eggs a la Turk  
Coffee  
\$2.25

Iced Cantaloupe  
Fresh Mushroom Omelette  
Coffee  
\$1.50

Strawberries and Cream  
Eggs Hussarde  
Coffee  
\$2.45

*all agree . . . wonderful food!*

**Brennan's**

VIEUX CARRE RESTAURANT  
BOURBON STREET AT BIENVILLE  
Open 'til Midnight

*Eggs Hussarde, The New Orleans States, November 24, 1951*

Eggs Hussarde in its original incarnation was a dish made with poached eggs placed atop Holland rusks, Canadian bacon and a red wine reduction *Marchand de Vin* sauce. The whole creation was then topped with *Hollandaise* sauce.

This world-renowned dish is believed to have been named after 15th-century Hungarian mercenaries called hussars, who wore uniforms of bright tomato red. *Le hussard* is the French word for such a soldier, and *à la hussarde* means in the fashion of a hussar. By the time of the Napoleonic Wars, the hussars played a prominent role as cavalry during the years 1796 to 1815. As light cavalymen mounted on fast horses, they were used to engage in skirmish battles as well as scouting.



*Hussars on horseback*

Over time, most of the great European powers raised hussar regiments, including the armies of France, Prussia, Russia, Austria and Britain. In the case of Britain, four light dragoon regiments were converted to hussars in the early 19th century.

The hussars of Napoleon perfected the tradition of *sabrage*, the art of opening a champagne bottle with a sabre. Another macho manifestation was the moustache, a prominent and universally displayed feature sported by Napoleonic-era hussars. British hussars were the only moustachioed troops in the British Army, although they did not all wear moustaches. Winston Churchill is such an example.

Commissioned in 1895 as a Cornet into the 4th Queen's Own Hussars, Churchill later became the Colonel-in-Chief of the Regiment. His Hussars Regiment was first raised in 1685 and saw service for almost three centuries, before being amalgamated into the Queen's Royal Irish Hussars in 1958. The 4th Hussars saw action throughout the Duke of Wellington's Peninsula Campaign and gained distinction in the Afghan War. The 4th participated in one of the most glorious actions of the British Cavalry (remembered in verse by Alfred, Lord Tennyson) when they made their famous charge alongside the 8th Hussars with the Light Brigade at Balaclava: "Theirs not to reason why, Theirs but

to do and die.”



*Young Winston of the 4th Hussars*

Perhaps because Chef Blangé was a native of the Netherlands, he chose Holland rusks as a major part of his recipe for Eggs Hussarde. In Germany rusks are known as *zwieback* (meaning twice-baked), in France as *biscotte*. In Italy, the term is *fette biscottate* (twice-baked sliced bread) and should not be confused with *biscotti* (Italian almond cookies). Rusks are slices of yeast bread (thick or thin) that are usually twice-baked until hard, dry, golden brown and crisp. In the United States, rusks are given to babies when they're teething.

**Friday, Jan. 29 — Efrem Zimbalist expounds on being a vegetarian. Chef Paul Blange prepares “hussard,” a meat dish, and “Bananas Fostra,” a flaming concoction. Dinah sings “New Orleans.”**

*Misspelling New Orleans dishes:  
Chef Blangé's 1971 appearance on Dinah Shore's "Dinah's Place"*

As mentioned before, Eggs Hussarde is traditionally made with two sauces, *Hollandaise* and *Marchand de Vin*. The latter sauce (French for “wine merchant”) is typically based on veal stock and red wine, but some cooks use a red wine reduction called divinity sauce instead. *Marchand de Vin* is the classic sauce, made by reducing red wine, stock and chopped shallots and then simmering in a basic *demi-glace* until the liquid is one-fourth its original volume.

Eggs Hussarde is still on the Brennan's menu today, but “housemade English muffins” have replaced the Holland rusks, and the Canadian bacon is “coffee cured.” Poached eggs, *Hollandaise* and *Marchand de Vin* are still important elements of this “*Brennan's Original*.”

No longer \$2.45, you just might have to say “Charge!”

## **NED HÉMARD**

New Orleans Nostalgia  
“Eggs Hussarde”  
Ned Hémard  
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